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Hon. Steve Israel

In the House of Representatives

Monday, September 25, 2006

Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend from Maryland, and I thank Chairman Davis for his cooperation on this very important bill. I also want to thank Ranking Member Waxman for considering this resolution, and also Representative Foxx for her leadership.

Mr. Speaker, this resolution supports the goals and ideals of a National Myositis Awareness Day. I was first introduced to the myositis community through my work to improve Medicare access to intravenous immune globulin, or IVIG. The myositis community is one of many patient groups that rely on IVIG. However, since there are several forms of myositis that affect different people in different ways, the disease is often misunderstood and cannot be treated with a single remedy. This is one of many reasons that it is important that we pass this resolution.

As the chairman said, each year an estimated 30,000 to 50,000 Americans are affected by myositis, a general term used to describe swelling of the muscles. Myositis patients suffer from their immune systems attacking their body's own normal tissue, resulting in inflammation or swelling. The disease can cause muscle weakness, and patients often live in chronic pain and have long-term health problems that can lead to permanent disabilities.

Myositis affects individuals of all ages and can come in many different forms. Many patients with treatable forms of myositis often have severe long-term disabilities because of failure to diagnose and treat the disease. In addition, the effects of inflammatory myopathies are much more severe than just inflammation. They are thought to be autoimmune diseases such as that the body's immune system, which normally fights infections and viruses, does not stop fighting once the infection or virus is gone.

Mr. Speaker, because myositis varies so much from patient to patient, no single existing treatment works for everyone. Myositis can be treated with steroids, various medicines and intravenous immune globulin.

The Myositis Association is the national patient advocacy organization serving the myositis community and has designated September 21 as Myositis Awareness Day. Myositis advocates traveled to Capitol Hill last Thursday in an effort to educate the public and Congress on the need for more research funding, accurate diagnosis, and effective treatments for this disease. This resolution thanks them for their work and dedicates the United States Congress to continuing the research for treatments.